

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

It is my honor and privilege to provide my support for HB 5158-59.

Our family became a member of the Deaf Community on May 2, 2008 when I gave birth to our son Gabriel (Gabe). Gabe is one of 90% Deaf children born to hearing families.

My son had been diagnosed in utero with a very rare Cleft Palate. This early diagnosis gave us the opportunity to interview surgeons, discuss surgical options and to also prepare for many of the syndromes or cognitive issues that often accompany Cleft Palate. Fortunately, Gabe was given a clean bill of health. Although more than 35 surgeries, in multiple states, have been completed to correct his facial deformities, nothing has been more challenging than getting Gabe the language accessibility and education he needs. We weren't prepared for a failed newborn screening and weren't provided the assistance needed by the medical or educational systems.

Gabe was 6 weeks old when we showed up at our Intermediate School District. They told us they didn't know what to do, they never had a child so young show up for services. School was going to be out for the summer soon and I was desperately trying to find information on how to communicate with and educate my Deaf son. I was handed a very large binder, told to talk to him like he was hearing and hearing aids were ordered. Home services were started, not for language, but for Occupational and Physical Therapy. In the fall we started a baby program with a hearing 'teacher' who used Signed Exact English or Pidgin Sign, when I asked why American Sign Language wasn't used I was told 'this is what we provide here'. No other options, no discussions on what was offered in other districts and NO SIGN LANGUAGE assistance to parents was given. We started using private tutors to assist our family in learning ASL, we'd still been provided no help from the medical or educational systems.

The first ABR for Gabe was completed at the Royal Oak Beaumont. Gabe 'failed'. He is profoundly Deaf with no access to verbal language. The audiologist told me I was lucky I didn't live in Oakland County, they would try to make my son 'Deaf'. When I questioned what that meant, she said they really favor sign language and have a strong 'Deaf' community. But she had just told me Gabe had a bi-lateral profound hearing loss? Again, no assistance in providing language to my son from the medical or educational systems.

Gabe isn't eligible for a Cochlear Implant, he doesn't have any auditory nerves. This was discovered when Gabe was 7 months old during a test that was only offered at the University of Michigan Children's Hospital. We were looking for the cause of Gabe's Deafness to see if there was an underlying syndrome. Since Gabe isn't eligible for a Cochlear Implant, we were left in a waiting room at the University of Michigan Children's Hospital by a very reputable surgeon who informed us that Gabe was just 'going to be Deaf', Gabe was slowly going to lose his laugh and his babbling, become silent and lose his ability for direct interaction because he wasn't stimulated by sound. My husband and I sat there in tears with no direction, nowhere to go. No assistance in language development by the medical or educational systems.

I provide all of this background information, not for sympathy, but for you to see that as parents we reached out to the people that should have assisted us on our educational journey with Gabe and were not provided any assistance. A chance meeting at my mother-in-law's church to meet the family of a woman that was a Deaf educator is what finally gave us some direction. That woman introduced us to a Deaf woman in our area that provided a wealth of educational resources, educational opportunities outside of our school district, introduction to the Deaf community and all of the social interactions that come with language. Our private tutoring began and after our daughter graduated high school, we moved to Oakland County. In Macomb County, we were given a take it or leave approach to the education of our son. Even when we provided background information for the services we requested regarding language and ASL, we were told 'we don't do that here'. We were never told we could get it anywhere else. And there were no parent programs offered. Our last IEP meeting, that lasted 6 hours with no conclusion, was the last meeting we ever had in Macomb County.

Our move to Oakland County provided many educational opportunities for Gabe, but he's still behind. More than a grade level behind in reading and writing. My husband and I made the difficult decision to hold Gabe back and repeat the 3rd Grade. This was a parent decision. The Program Director was surprised by our request because Gabe is very smart, but his language deprivation in his formidable years has impacted Gabe's education. If we didn't hold Gabe back, there is no way for him to get caught up. He meets his IEP goals, because he grows educationally one grade level at a time – but where is the opportunity for him catch up what was missed.

How different would things have been for Gabe and our family if there was a requirement for language development for Deaf children from birth? What if my husband and I had been provided resources and options – more than a binder and what the local ISD program offered? The need for early language development is critical, especially if the world uses a different written language than you. Deaf children are bilingual from birth and both languages need to be acknowledged and nourished.

I'm not advocating to make decisions for parents or take decisions away from parents, only to provide a solid foundation for whatever mode of communication their child chooses. We don't hesitate for our hearing babies and pre-schoolers to learn Spanish or ASL for that matter, but for some reason to require solid language foundation in ASL for Deaf children is less acceptable. Studies have shown early visual language exposure to visual learners is a key factor to future success, HB 5158-59 will ensure language foundation is available to all Deaf children.

Our family is honored to have the opportunity to support this legislation. There are many families, like ours, that are trying to find the right tools and resources for their Deaf children. It's terrifying to be handed a child that you don't know how you will communicate or how they will fair in the world, our son was the first Deaf person we ever met. Empowering parents with tools and resources to provide language acquisition to Deaf children will change lives, for the parents and well as preparing the children for success.

Thank you for allowing me to share our family story.

Mary Mitchell
691 Brookwood Lane
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

It is my honor to approach this distinguished committee and provide my support for HB 5158-59. These bills empower parents with information and access to the appropriate educational options for their Deaf, Deaf-blind and Hard of Hearing children. Their goal is Kindergarten readiness and communication access for the educational process. By age 5, a child's brain is already 90% developed, yet most Deaf children enter kindergarten without language. This is a tragedy.

As a life-long participant in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, and professional language specialist for the last 39 years I can verify the need for language acquisition during the Deaf, Deaf-blind and Hard of Hearing child's critical language acquisition window. It is important that these children reach the same language acquisition milestones as their hearing counterparts to become Kindergarten ready. When they do not, it directly impacts:

1) their education – with language delays we see many of our Deaf, Deaf-blind and Hard of Hearing adults only reaching a third-grade reading level;

The lack of early and full accessible visual language exposure may be a contributing factor to the low levels of reading achievement in the deaf population.

Baker, Sharon, Ed.D, Advantages of Early Visual Language, January 2011; Visual Language & Learning; Gallaudet University

2) their safety – due to communication delays Deaf, Deaf-blind and Hard of Hearing children are more vulnerable to predators and abuse;

90% of all Deaf children experience some kind of physical, sexual, or mental abuse.

54% of Deaf boys fall victim to sexual abuse compared to 9% of hearing boys.

50% of Deaf girls are victims of sexual crimes compared to 25% of hearing girls.

Tate (2012) Trauma in the Deaf Population: Definition, Experience, and Services. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)

3) their mental health – language delays cause frustration, depression, anxiety and abuse;

Mental health disorders were 4.5 times more likely to be found in Deaf children than hearing children.

Tate (2012) Trauma in the Deaf Population: Definition, Experience, and Services. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)

4) and eventually under employment or lack of employment.

Linguistic deprivation also diminishes one's educational and career possibilities, since the cognitive factor that correlates best to literacy is a foundation in a first language - and without literacy one's professional opportunities are highly circumscribed.

Language acquisition for deaf children: Reducing the harms of zero tolerance to the use of alternative approaches
Tom Humphries, Poorna Kushalnagar, Gaurav Mathur, Donna Jo Napoli, Carol Padden, Christian Rathmann, Scott R Smith
Harm Reduct J. 2012; 9: 16.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language."

– Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

I am grateful that Representatives Howrylak and Phelps and their esteemed colleagues have taken on the challenge of drafting this legislation and supporting Deaf, Deaf-blind, and Hard of Hearing children's language acquisition in this state. With the appropriate and inclusive information, parents will be empowered to prepare their children for Kindergarten, schooling, and eventually a lifetime of fulfillment.

Thank you.

Carmen Johnson
2179 Rushmore
Troy, MI 48083

HB 5158 Health Policy
HB 5159 10/25/17

Representative Vaupel, Members of the Health Policy Committee

I am Ann Liming and I am representing the Hearing Loss Association of Michigan which is an affiliate of the National Hearing Loss Association of America. We are happy to give our support to the EMPOWER bill and the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children's educational Bill of Rights. We are especially pleased that the choice for a child's communication mode is placed with the parents. It is our observation that parents who have sought information and actively participated in the acquisition of language for their child are raising, or have raised, children who are doing well in educational settings, socially and in the larger community. Educational materials that will be provided will not only help parents to make appropriate choices for their child but will enable them to be a strong advocate for the child as well. These materials will also expand the knowledge of professionals who work with children with hearing loss and help them to recognize the uniqueness of each child and to realize that one size does not fit all.

We are aware that currently there are disparities in services for children with hearing loss from one county to another. It is our hope that these bills will create equality in services so that all children in Michigan will have equal opportunity to achieve language acquisition that leads to success in the educational setting

Melissa Weipert

From: D Calaman <dch2o@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 10:31 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: House Bill #5158 is EMPOWER (Early Meaningful Parent Outreach with Educational Resources) and House Bill #5159 ins the Deaf Child Education Bill of Rights

Dear Representative,

Please approve these two bills. Why? Early outreach is imperative to language development at the time when most babies start to learn language. Without this interaction, the babies will fall behind their hearing peers. This allows the deaf and deaf/blind to have a most enabling environment to learn and be successful.

The Bill of Rights is very important in today's society because it provides for the rights that are needed for Deaf children to obtain the resources they need to be successful.

Thank you,
Doug Calaman, Proud Parent of a Deaf Daughter

Melissa Weipert

From: Kevin Morrison <kmorrison81@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 4:15 PM
To: Melissa Weipert; Amanda Gill
Subject: House Bill 5158 and 5159

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

Because of lack of language, I did poorly in school. I was behind in many ways, including in my academics and social life. I did not understand things such as school announcements, daily activities or my classmates sharing information with each other. My grades suffered because I often misunderstood the teacher. In school I always felt isolated.

I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Kevin A Morrison
409 W Bridge St
Lyons Mi, 48851

Melissa Weipert

From: Cech, James <jcech@med.umich.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 2:14 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: EMPOWER

Good afternoon Ms. Weipert,

I wanted to send an email as a show of support for House Bills 5158 and 5159.

I personally support the two bills and their potential to improve quality of life via access to language. I do not have a strong educational or early childhood development background, but as someone who sees patients all along the language spectrum I can tell you that the children who are most successful and operate similarly to their peers who are not Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing are ones whose parents were exposed to a variety of communication methods. This legislation is a step forward in bringing ASL (American Sign Language) into the discussion for children with hearing loss at an earlier point in a parent's search for resources, which is of great value to the community of visual language users and great potential to the family.

Our University is a center of expertise in cochlear implants, yet we also have the one of the largest Deaf patient populations and provide American Sign Language interpreters for thousands of patient appointments each year. We see the evidence of people who had language access from a young age and their success in managing their health care and those who have not and are at a greater disadvantage. Please convey to the committee that this legislation is important and needs to be given due process.

James Cech

ASL/English Interpreter, BEI 3; M/MH, DB endorsed
Michigan Medicine
Interpreter Services Program
2025 Traverwood Dr, Suite A4
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Electronic Mail is not secure, may not be read every day, and should not be used for urgent or sensitive issues

Melissa Weipert

From: Melissa L. Rich <melissarich@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 9:16 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

October 25, 2017

To whom it may concern,

As an United States Deaf citizen, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard-of-Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language.

Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language-rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

Thank you,

Melissa L. Rich

Melissa Weipert

From: pauliecalandra@gmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 10:55 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Support

I support HB 5185 and HB 5159

Thanks,
Paul

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Teresa Fear <terrifear@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 11:17 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: House Bill 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School Terri Fear

Melissa Weipert

From: Craig, Alexa <Alexa.Craig@ascension.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 9:09 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 1518 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf professional and woman, I am very proud to stand in support both of these important bills which are HB 5158 and 5159. I am so fortunate to have a wonderful language, full support system, and Deaf role models when I grew up in Bloomfield Hills district. I can't imagine my life without American Sign Language because it is a piece of the puzzles in my life. If a piece is taken away from me then my identify, culture, and community, and communication is gone forever. This language, community, and my education get me to where I am right now today.

After years later, my fears get worse when I see the programs cut off and number of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children less and less in the programs.

Like all children in the school system have the right full access to quality education. So do I fully support the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing children must have the same right as other children too.

If you decided to not pass these bills...If I ever become a Mother, I will be afraid to think or know if I will have a baby, who is Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing because I don't want my Deaf, DeafBlind, or Hard of Hearing does not have the full right to a full access to the quality education and his/her language or isolated in the school.

It's really important to have these important bills to pass.

Sincerely,

Alexa Craig

Senior Program Director, The Holley Institute
Ascension | St. John Providence
St. John Hospital & Medical Center
Boll Prof. Bldg. 1, Suite 223
22151 Moross Road
Detroit, MI 48236-2172
Ascension.org/Michigan
T: 313-343-4084
F: 313-343-4111
Alexa.Craig@ascension.org

The Holley Institute

Creating New Worlds for Children and Adults
with Deafness, Hearing and Vision Loss

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Melissa Weipert

From: Portia Gray <newlife4ever8@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 9:08 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Deaf Children do not have the best education, today

10/25/2017

Melissa Weipert
Committee Clerk

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Sincerely,

Portia Gray, BSW, LBSW
c/o: 19192 Pennington
Detroit, Michigan 48221
Videophone: 313 681 5563

Melissa Weipert

From: Carol Kuplicki <cpag75@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:54 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Bill

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Carol Kuplicki

Melissa Weipert

From: Melody Ahern <melodyika@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:17 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Right education!

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Jamie Maes <jlmaes29@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:19 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: House Bill 5158 and 5159

To: Chairman Vauple and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB of 5158 & 5159

These bills will promote better education for the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing students in the Michigan.

Many Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employability skills.

Like hearing children, Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system. While I hold a Masters degree, I still firmly believe that if I had language early on, I would be in a much better position.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an critical step in Deaf Education.

Jamie Maes-Eischen
5130 Chianti Ct.
Clarkston MI 48348

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that many parents are not fully informed or offered different options. I am a parent of two Deaf children. When my children were born there was not anyone that was fully knowledgeable about Deafness and the options that are available.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Nicole Beaver
1278 Kra-nur Dr.
Burton, MI 48509

Melissa Weipert

From: Julie Kramer <jskramer13@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:23 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Sincerely,

Julie Kramer
Beverly Hills, MI
jskramer13@gmail.com

Melissa Weipert

From: Nicole Faino <nicole.faino@ymail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:31 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Support of HB 5158 and 5159

Ok To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Eischen Jr., Jeffrey <Jeffrey.EischenJr@fanucamerica.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:34 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: House Bill 5158 and 5159

To: Chairman Vauple and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB of 5158 & 5159

These bills will promote better education for the Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing students in the Michigan.

Many Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employability skills.

Like hearing children, Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system. While I hold a Bachelor degree, I still firmly believe that if I had language early on, I would be in a much better position.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an critical step in Deaf Education.

Jeff Eischen Jr.
5130 Chianti Ct.
Clarkston MI 48348

Jeff Eischen Jr.
Sr. Mechanical Engineer
Paint Shop Automation
Phone: (248) 209-6310
Fax: (248) 377-7449
Mobile: (248) 495-6498 (TEXT MESSAGE ONLY)
Email: jeff.eischen2@fanucamerica.com



Melissa Weipert

From: Mark Halley <markoicu@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:38 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and HB 5159

Dear Ms. Weipert,

As a doctoral candidate and a professional American Sign Language-English interpreter, I would like to note my support both of HB 5158 and 5159.

If enacted, these bills will make an importance difference in the lives of deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing children. Children must have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. In my studies, I have reviewed research demonstrating that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the primary contributor to many deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language-rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influences the outcomes of their adult lives.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Mark Halley, MA, NIC
Doctoral candidate, Gallaudet University
American Sign Language-English Interpreter
Email: markoicu@gmail.com

Phone: 248.979.8174
Waterford, MI

Melissa Weipert

From: Diana Campbell <dsoupo@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:40 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony

House Health Policy Committee

October 23, 2017

9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Melissa Weipert

From: Annette Trayner <disneymelv@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:41 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Deaf children

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Sonja Miller <sonjajmiller@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:46 AM
To: Melissa Weipert

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Sent from my iPhone

Sonja

Melissa Weipert

From: Jordan Jones <jrjones604@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:36 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. I was strongly influenced by American Sign Language when I was baby and I've found my own foundation of language that I can achieve my dreams. Meanwhile, I've seen other Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children who are struggling or couldn't find their own foundation of language because they couldn't identify any available resources. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. Every Deaf children deserves the opportunity to blossom in their critical first few years of life.

Jordan Jones

Melissa Weipert

From: Paul Kuplicki <kup262@prodigy.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:39 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158&5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Paul J. Kuplicki, Sr.

Melissa Weipert

From: Celena Coons <beautifulravenwithdarkeyes@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:42 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: I support bills HB 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a parent of two Deaf sons, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

I whole heartedly agree with what Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor at Harvard Medical School has to say below. "The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Celena Coons

Melissa Weipert

From: Megan Seipke-Dame <meganseipke@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 8:02 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: House Bills 5158 & 5159

Good morning Ms. Weipert,

My name is Megan Seipke-Dame. I am an ASL-English Interpreter specializing in K-12 educational interpreting. I'm emailing you this morning to share my avid, stout support for House Bills 5158 and 5159.

As an educational interpreter working with Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students around Oakland County, I see the need for early language exposure and the need for establishing a way to measure a student's language learning progress.

Students within this population are highly vulnerable. As a low-incidence population, their needs are often grossly neglected. Students within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program in Bloomfield Hills, at the Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint, and within the program in Grand Rapids have it better than those students isolated in their home school districts without other DHH peers, without a teacher who can sign, with a teacher consultant from the intermediate school district that is not fluent (or worse, does not know) in American Sign Language.

These bills will help establish and provide critical support for students who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing and I fully support them both.

Thank you for both your time and your consideration.
Megan Seipke-Dame
980 Shenandoah Ct.
Clawson, MI 48017

Sent from my iPad

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

Because of lack of language, I did poorly in school. I was behind in many ways, including in my academics and social life. I did not understand things such as school announcements, daily activities or my classmates sharing information with each other. My grades suffered because I often misunderstood the teacher. In school I always felt isolated.

I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Sandra Goulart
916 Parliament ave
Madison Heights,
MI 48071

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Sandra Goulart
916 Parliament ave
Madison Heights,
MI 48071

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

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I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Robin Wilson
981 Milverton Dr
Troy, Michigan 48083

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

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Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Robin Wilson
981 Milverton Dr
Troy, MI 48083

Melissa Weipert

From: Maria Erace <italymaria@mac.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:34 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: Empower and Bill of Rights

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

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I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Maria Erace
43326 Interlaken Dr
Sterling Heights MI 48313

Melissa Weipert

From: Maria Erace <italymaria@mac.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 7:31 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: Empower and Bill of Rights

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

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Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Maria Erace
43326 Interlaken Dr
Sterling Heights MI 48313

Melissa Weipert

From: Lynn Sedlacko <lynnsed@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 6:51 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Lynn Sedlacko
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

October 25, 2017

To whom it may concern,

As an United States Deaf citizen and an oral-mainstreamed survivor, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard-of-Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language.

Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language-rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

You are welcome to contact me via email, lynnsed@hotmail.com or call at 248-206-9004.

Sincerely,

Lynn Sedlacko

Melissa Weipert

From: Michelle Osterhout <elle@osterhout.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 6:37 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language."

— Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Thank you for reading and adding my name to the list of true supporters of this bill.

Michelle osterhout

~elle Sent from my iPhone

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

Because of lack of language, I did poorly in school. I was behind in many ways, including in my academics and social life. I did not understand things such as school announcements, daily activities or my classmates sharing information with each other. My grades suffered because I often misunderstood the teacher. In school I always felt isolated.

I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Signed by
Karee McCoy
633 N Long Lake
Lake Orion, MI 48362

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Signed by Karee McCoy
633 N Long Lake
Lake Orion, MI 48362

Melissa Weipert

From: Janet Juras <janetjuras@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 6:00 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Fwd: HB #5158/5159 Support

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Janet Juras" <janetjuras@gmail.com>
Date: Oct 25, 2017 5:56 AM
Subject: HB #5158/5159 Support
To: <mweipert@mi.house.gov>
Cc:

Dear Clerk Weipert-

Please enter for the House HPC hearing record for today, my support for both the following House Bills.

1. E.M.P.O.W.E.R.
HB#5158 the Deaf Child's Educational Bill of Rights i

2. HB #5159

Sincerely,
Janet Juras, RID CI/CT
Nationally Certified Interpreter
Daughter of Deaf parents
Lansing Michigan

PO Box 14264
Lansing MI 48901
517-862-5815 Direct/Text

Melissa Weipert

From: Rosemary Langevin <rosemarylangevin@jarc.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 3:15 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158&5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language." – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Rosemary Langevin

Melissa Weipert

From: Susan L <susanl9620@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 12:12 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and HB 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person case manager , I fully support both of these bills, including **HB 5158** and **HB 5159**. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language."

– Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Thank you,

Susan Lundy
5731 Savoy Dr
Waterford, Mich 48327
SusanL9620@gmail.com

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Samantha Hoeksema <hoeksema.samantha@student.oaklandcc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:51 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB5158 5159

To whom it may concern,

As an advocate for the Deaf community, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language."

– Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. My parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I was raised orally. I still can't hear or speak even with a hearing aid. I am a profoundly Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system by using ASL and English.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Michael Morrison
3374 Wolverine Drive
Troy, MI 48083

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

Because of lack of language, I did poorly in school. I was behind in many ways, including in my academics and social life. I did not understand things such as school announcements, daily activities or my classmates sharing information with each other. My grades suffered because I often misunderstood the teacher. In school I always felt isolated.

I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Joyce LaHaye
320 Airport Dr.
Holly, Mi. 48442

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Barney Morrison
3374 Wolverine Drive
Troy, MI 48083

Melissa Weipert

From: Heba Schwebke <hebarita@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:16 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: my support for bill Empower Bill 5158. And Deaf child bill of right 5159.

I support the bill EMPOWER Bill - 5158 and Deaf Child of Right 5159, I have a good reason to explain about my experience in my past childhood. I have a been struggled my whole life until I was in middle school and found who I am. I met a deaf mentor when I was in middle school I adore her and learn sign language from her. She admired me who I am and proud be a deaf. Before Middle School, I don't even know who I am and what was my identify and I lost who I am until I met a deaf mentor and found myself and identity as deaf. She saved my life and identify who I am.

As English grammar, I am still struggle to how to write a perfect struture of grammar. I don't have a conflict or lack of skills to write that because I learned sign language in later. I wish I learned earlier when I was a baby and my language will be better and achieve.

a

I don't want my future DDBHH struggled as me. I want them to be conflict and successful their life, to learn sign language in early ages as equal language, 100 % access full information language. If parents chosen to spoken and please provide learn sign language as equal.

I wish my parents awareness of sign language if my parents choose me to spoken English instead of learn sign language because doctors or audiologist don't mention about ASL or learn sign language. I wish they promate to my parents about ASL, even though they want me learn how to spoken but including learn how to sign language.

I don't want my future all Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of hearing (DDBHH) behind their language, and need to be achieve their goal and have confident role model/leader for their future deaf kids. They need to 100 % access to their first language.

Please accept my support for bill Empower Bill 5158. And Deaf child bill of right 5159.

Thank You,

Melissa Weipert

From: Drew Weldon <drew.weldon@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:14 PM
To: Amanda Gill
Cc: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Re: HB 5158 & 5159

Drew
Sent from my iPhone

On Oct 24, 2017, at 11:01 PM, Camille Jeter-Lorello <jeterloreello.camille@gmail.com> wrote:

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House
Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and
Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

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skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and
employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that
my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is
my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a
better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an
important step in Deaf Education.

Sincerely,

Melissa Weipert

From: Camille Jeter-Lorello <jeterloreello.camille@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:02 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Sincerely,

Camille Jeter-Lorello
169 Post Branch
Fenton, MI 48430

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Kevin R. SMITH <rkevsmith@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 11:00 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Written Testimony; House Health Policy Committee; October 25, 2017; 9:00am

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00am

To: Chariman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 and 5159.

I am hard of hearing. Overnight, I lost the hearing in my left ear. The months of vertigo and ringing in my deaf ear that followed were very difficult to cope with, but I was ten years old and I bounced back because I grew up with a language.

I am an extremely lucky hard of hearing person: by the age of ten, my maternal language was so well developed that I would acquire two more spoken languages by the age of twenty-one. I value communication and language so much that I eventually became a teacher of languages: English, French, and Spanish.

Dr. Maria Montessori knew the importance of the earliest years of life, zero to five, when children will develop memory, social skills, a love of learning, a sense of self, and the ability to do things for themselves. From the earliest ages, children are capable of extraordinary growth. A huge caveat, however, that cannot be overlooked, is that this growth is dependent on language—these skills and characteristics depend on language. Be it French, Chinese, ASL, or English, humans require language. For a child to grow up without a language is tantamount to torture and abuse.

As you know, the United States of America has no official language. My grandparents' parents did not speak English when they arrived, but they had a language and learned English later. A lot of Deaf kids will learn English, too, though they will never hear it. The question really is, should it take them all those extra years before gaining the proficiency in English just because ASL was mistakenly seen as a barrier to language acquisition because it was never properly understood as a language in its own right? I heard an expert on language acquisition in France speaking in the early 2000s who said that it takes a decade to learn another language. The farther the person is away from infancy, the more time that is required toward that end. Why would we disadvantage any child when the natural choice is waving at us right in front of our faces?

Respectfully,
Kevin R. SMITH
417 S. Huron St.
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Student of ASL since January 2017
Hard of Hearing since June 1989
Uncle to eight bilingual nieces and nephews (English-Spanish/English-Chinese)

Melissa Weipert

From: Dylan <dylan.secord@deafcan.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 10:58 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf clinical social worker, I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

"The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language."

– Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Dylan Secord
24347 Samoset Trail
Southfield, MI 48033

Sincerely,
Dylan Secord, LLMSW
Clinical Social Worker
Deaf C.A.N.!.
2111 Orchard Lake Road - Suite #101
Sylvan Lake, MI 48320
(248)-636-2355

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:

The contents of this email message and any attachments are intended solely for the addressee(s) and may contain confidential and/or privileged information and may be legally protected from disclosure. If you are not the intended recipient of this message or their agent, or if this message has been addressed to you in error, please immediately alert the sender by reply email and then delete this message and any attachments. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any use, dissemination, copying, or storage of this message or its attachments is strictly prohibited. Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Andrea M Wenderski <andreamwenderski@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 10:47 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5185 and HB 5159

I am sending you this email to voice my support for the two bills before the legislature, HB 5185 and HB 5159, regarding language accessibility for Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing Children.

These children have a right to enter school at the same level of competence as their hearing peers. The denial of language access at young ages is criminal. Study upon study has proven, time and again, that early language development is key for opening the doors educationally. Why deny a child the ability to successfully open those doors based on what the medical community and society in it's quest for "perfect" deem to be a disability? Why focus on what a person can't do and then make it hard for them to prove what they can do by taking away the very thing that will allow them to function as equals?

These bills, which clearly address the needs of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, were formulated by the experts of that very community. They recognize and know what their youngest members need in order to be happy, well-adjusted, well-educated, and productive members of our state and of our country; and, the need is equal access to language, as well as qualified and competent support.

Thank you for your consideration of my words.

Andrea M. Wenderski

Melissa Weipert

From: Joanne Forbes <jls.forbes@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 10:36 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Public Comment for HB #5158 HB #5159

Hi my name is Joanne Forbes and I am deaf adult living in Royal Oak, MI. I am supporting the E.M.P.O.W.E.R. HB #5158 and the Deaf Child's Educational Bill of Rights HB #5159.

My background is mainly in mainstreamed setting which focused on using Sign Language as our primary language. As there were many well rounded teachers, there were a quite few that did not understand how to work with Deaf or HOH children or let alone know sign language. Often, our education standards for Deaf and HOH children does not match up to the standards as hearing children. Because of that, we fall behind which has a domino effect for the rest of our lives. It is so important that the state has guidelines on how to work with Deaf, HOH, and DeafBlind children to be successful and proud individuals in the community.

Also, I am also one of the lucky ones that is able to communicate with my family through sign language. There are many of my deaf friends that do not want to go home for the Holidays because they can't communicate with their families. As a mom to a two years old daughter, it is so important to have a relationship with your kids. Parents should be informed of ALL possible options, which means including sign language.

Thank you!

--

Joanne Skowzgird Forbes

Oakland Community College
Dept. of Art, Design & Humanities
Department Chair
Highland Lakes Campus
7350 Cooley Lake Road
Waterford, MI 48327
VP: 248-707-1380

Melissa Weipert

From: Kathleen Mitchell <kanson3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 10:30 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 & HB 5159

Dear Melissa,

I am writing to support bills HB 5158 and HB 5159. I strongly believe Deaf, HoH and Deaf Blind children should have equal access to education as much as hearing counterparts.

Thank you
Kathy Mitchell

22152 Cleveland
Dearborn, MI 48124

Melissa Weipert

From: Wendie St. Clair <wstclair@mcc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 10:22 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB #5158 and HB #5159

Ms. Weipert,

Two house bills (E.M.P.O.W.E.R. is HB #5158 and the Deaf Child's Educational Bill of Rights is HB #5159) regarding Education of our Deaf, HOH, & DeafBlind children will have a hearing tomorrow morning, Wednesday, October 25th at 9:00 a.m in front of the House Health Policy Committee.

I am writing to send my support for these two bills. I am an ally with the Deaf community and am perusing my license currently to become an interpreter. These two bills are extremely important and deserve to be reviewed and taken into proper consideration. Our Deaf children in Michigan deserve to have proper language development. These bills need to pass.

Thank you for your time in this matter,

Wendie Dillehay
118 S Beech St
Flushing, MI 48433

Melissa Weipert

From: Cece Winkler <chenrywinkler@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:46 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Bills 5158 and 5169

Greetings,

I am a retired teacher, school administrator and Sign Language Interpreter. After 40 years in the field I have never seen more more important legislation for Michigan's Deaf children than Bill 5158 E.M.P.O.W.E.R and Bill 5159 Deaf Child Educational Bill of Rights.

These bills allow students to have their educational rights solidified by law with clear benchmarks for linguistic success for the students and their families. Measurable outcomes for language acquisition have been sadly lacking in our field, allowing our Deaf children to languish without a strong first language thereby crippling their ability to master core content on par with their hearing peers.

I urge you to read and support these Bills which support Deaf Children's rights to access to language, equality and academic success. This is what is truly making our students college and career ready.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cecelia A Winkler, MA BEI III

Melissa Weipert

From: Sarah Hein <sarhein@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:41 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB #5158

Hello,

My name is Sarah Hein. I am a hard of hearing adult that lives in the Royal Oak area. I have lived in Michigan my whole life. I am a product of early intervention and I had two loving parents who gave it their all to help me become successful. I am a staff nurse in critical care at Beaumont Hospital. I am going back to graduate school in January to get my advanced practice nursing degree. I use hearing aids and relay services on the phone for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I do face my share of discrimination but, I am proud to be who I am. I am part of the Deaf culture and becoming proficient in American Sign Language. Growing up in the 80s, and 90s, I did not have a lot of rights as an individual with a disability and my parents did not always get all the proper resources and options for me. They had to FIGHT to get me where I am today. I believe that today's Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind youth should have ALL options (and exposure to English, ASL) and resources available to them. They should also be encouraged to follow whatever dreams they wish to pursue. They shouldn't have to face the barriers and discrimination that I faced growing up. Please put me down for support of HB #5158 and #5159. You may contact me if you have questions or need further information.

--

Sarah Hein, BS, MS, BSN, RN
sarhein@gmail.com

Melissa Weipert

From: victor battani <vrbattani@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:34 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

Because of lack of language, I did poorly in school. I was behind in many ways, including in my academics and social life. I did not understand things such as school announcements, daily activities or my classmates sharing information with each other. My grades suffered because I often misunderstood the teacher. In school I always felt isolated.

I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.
Please support HB 5158 & 5159. Thank you

Victor Battani

46716 Ferguson Lane

Macomb, MI 48044

--
VRB III Sent from my iPhone 5

Melissa Weipert

From: victor battani <vrbattani@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:31 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Victor Battani

46716 Ferguson Lane

Macomb MI 48044

--

VRB III Sent from my iPhone 5

Melissa Weipert

From: Angela Battani <iangelamobile@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:26 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony

House Health Policy Committee

October 23, 2017

9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

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Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Melissa Weipert

From: mark seres <mark.seres@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 8:01 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: Written Testimony #2.docx

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

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I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out..

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Mark Seres
5750 Strathdon Way
Waterford Mi 48327

Sent from my iPad

Melissa Weipert

From: mark seres <mark.seres@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 7:59 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: Written Testimony #1.docx

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Mark Seres
5750 Strathdon Way
Waterford Mi 48327

Sent from my iPad

Melissa Weipert

From: Jodi Seres <jodirae.seres@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 7:42 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: Written Testimony #2.docx

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 25, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to me. These bills are the 1) EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and 2) Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

Our teachers and schools need help in educating our Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing children. My parents were never offered or told about American Sign Language (ASL). They had to find out about it on their own. Yes, I fell behind in school.

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I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Jodi Seres
5750 Strathdon Way
Waterford, Mi. 48327

Melissa Weipert

From: Laura <lrswami724@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 5:23 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: Bills 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern-

It is imperative that these two bill are passed- 5158 and 5159. The first bill would empower parents to have the proper resources available when raising a deaf child, and the second bill ensures the right of all deaf children to have access to American Sign Language. Communication is a human right, and there are powerful forces who would seek to deny deaf children this basic right, due to financial loss for themselves, and their own agenda. As a person who has worked extensively in the Deaf community in Michigan, and who has seen the effects on children when they are not taught sign language until they enter school, if at all, I urge these bills to be passed. Please hear the voices of the community who has been silenced far too long!!

Sincerely,

Laura Rodriguez
6145 Wilderness Pt
Grand Blanc MI 48439
810-252-1739

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Written Testimony
House Health Policy Committee
October 23, 2017
9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

These bills will promote a better education for Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing students in the State of Michigan.

Many deaf children display language deprivation and communication skills, which ultimately impact their adult life, social skills and employment.

Children need accessible language (visual) at an early age. I feel that my parents were not fully informed or offered different options (ASL is my language). I am a Deaf person that could have benefited from a better educational system.

Thank you for reading my email and offering your support to such an important step in Deaf Education.

Elizabeth Makowski
31511 Meadows Ave
Madison Heights, Mi 48071

Melissa Weipert

From: Paul Kuplicki Jr <paulkuplickijr@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 11:22 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf person/professional , I fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. It will make a huge difference in the lives of Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing children, if they have the ability to acquire a strong foundation of language. Research has shown that language deprivation or delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual reading, academic, and social struggles. The type of language - rich environment and the quality of interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

“The single great risk faced by Deaf children is inadequate exposure to a usable first language.” – Dr. Sanjay Gulati, Professor, Harvard Medical School

Thanks,
Paul Kuplicki, Jr.

Melissa Weipert

From: Samantha Hauptert <samrh8915@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 11:56 AM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 and 5159

To whom it may concern,

As a Deaf professional, we are fully support both of these bills, including HB 5158 and 5159. We was strongly influenced by American Sign Language when we was Babies and we have found our own foundation of Language that we can achieve to our dreams to communication with them. Also, We having see other Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard-of-Hearing children who are struggling or couldn't find their own of foundation of language, because they couldn't identify any available resources. Research has shown that language deprivation of delays between ages 0-5 is the main cause of many Deaf children's eventual Reading , Social Struggles, and Academic. every Deaf children Deserves the opportunity to blossom in their critical first in few years of Life.

Samantha and Andrew Hauptert

Melissa Weipert

From: Bethany McLain <isignbethany@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 25, 2017 1:23 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Subject: HB 5158 & 59

I am the mother of a little girl who is Hard of Hearing. I am also a professional working in the field w children who are Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing. I totally support HB 5158 and 5159. I see the results daily of language deprivation in these kids. Reading scores and all around struggles are often the result of these early years. The huge delay in getting language and appropriate services can make a huge difference.

Thank you,
Behany McLain
Shelby Twp, Mi

Sent from my iPhone

Melissa Weipert

From: Mark Seres <mjrseres@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 8:04 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: Written Testimony HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony

House Health Policy Committee

October 25, 2017

9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

There are two bills that are very important to my family and I. These bills are EMPOWER Bill (House Bill 5158) and the Deaf Children's Educational Bill of Rights (House Bill 5159).

I come from a large family consisting of seventeen Deaf individuals, my son Elijah being the seventeenth Deaf person. While I am not Deaf myself, ASL (American Sign Language) was crucial in my language development. Now ASL is the foundation and strength in Elijah's development.

Elijah is 20 months old and currently has a vocabulary of well over one-hundred words. His first word (Dog) came at just six months old. His expanded vocabulary includes words such as Baseball, Hockey, Alligator, Giraffe, and iPad. We are very proud of Elijah. His language acquisition has surpassed many milestones put in place for his hearing peers. We have experienced many of his Deaf peers only now signing their first words and being forced to "catch up" to those same hearing peers.

Lack of early exposure to the correct resources and ASL causes the delay that most Deaf children need to overcome. Some children are able to catch up, others do not. These children reach limits based on the resources and language that is available to them and their parents. In this case, the failures within the current system to create developmental milestones and provide adequate resources for parents to make educated decisions are the main cause of the language deprivation. Parents, educators and children need to be provided with the appropriate resources and tools ensuring early success in Deaf children.

I am convinced through this legislation, with the formation of the committees; Deaf children will be able to THRIVE and no longer be deprived. I ask you to please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you.

Mark Seres Jr

6224 Waking Ln

Waterford, MI 48329

Melissa Weipert

From: Angela Battani <iangelamobile@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 9:27 PM
To: Melissa Weipert
Cc: Amanda Gill
Subject: HB 5158 & 5159

Written Testimony

House Health Policy Committee

October 25, 2017

9:00 a.m.

To: Chairman Vaupel and the distinguished members of the House Health Policy Committee

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I even had limited communication with my family because they were not encouraged to learn ASL, a language in which we could have communicated as a family. Instead, I was often left out.

Please help our children.

Please support HB 5158 & 5159.

Thank you

Angela Katcher-Battani

46716 Ferguson Lane

Macomb, MI 48044